

RULES OF DISCERNMENT of

ST. IGNATIUS
OF LOYOLA

First, what state am I in?

1. Going from major sin to major sin? Enemy proposes imaginary “delights” to keep us there. The Good Spirit will use the light of reason and “stings” the conscience.
2. Going forward in service of God and toward greater perfection? Good Spirit gives courage, consolations and peace. Evil Spirit gives sadness and uses false reasonings.
3. What is Consolation? Any interior movement that leaves me inflamed with love of God, holy tears, any increase in faith/hope/love, joy and deep peace.
4. What is Desolation? The opposite of consolation: interior darkness, inner disturbance, compulsive attraction to base things, spiritual slothfulness, sadness.

Now I know what consolations and desolations are... What do I do about them?

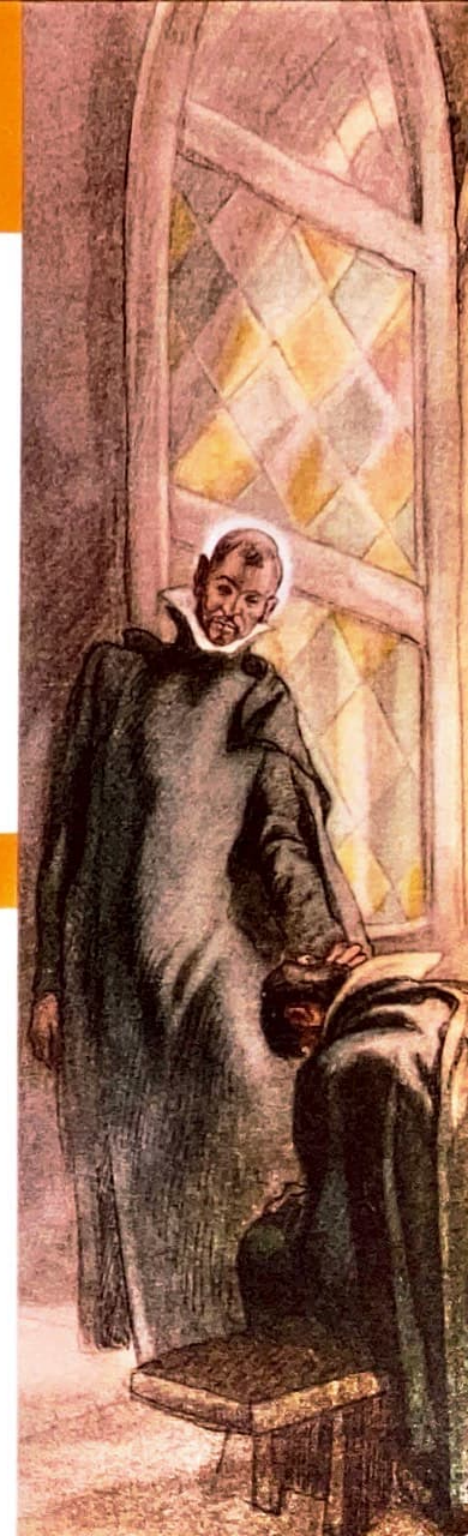
When in desolation:

5. Don't make any change to good decisions I made while in consolation.
6. Intensify action against the desolation: prayer, meditation, penance, examen.
7. Remember: despite the desolation, I still have sufficient strength and salvific grace.
8. Be patient, because consolation will return (it always does).

Why am I in desolation?

9. Three reasons, according to St. Ignatius: a) I was negligent in my prayers, b) God is allowing it to test and strengthen me, c) God is allowing it to show me that consolation is a gift not something I command. Note: God doesn't cause desolation.

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When in consolation:

10. Enjoy the consolation and fix it in my memory to strengthen me for later.
E.g., journal about it or share it with others.
11. Humble myself and remember my absolute dependency on God.

Three Handy Rules. The enemy acts like:

12. a Bully: emboldened by signs of weakness, but backs down from a show of strength.
Resist boldly!
13. a Seducer: empowered by secrecy, but flees when exposed to the light.
Talk about your struggles to someone!
14. an Army Commander: seeks to exploit the hidden gaps in my defenses.
Shore up my weak areas!

The three “times” or ways to make an “election” or a choice:

- I. When I receive an unmistakable grace about God’s will. ← I simply *must* follow!
(e.g., St. Paul’s conversion)
- II. My experiences of consolations and desolations over time reveal the positive direction of God’s will. ← most of us discern here!
- III. When there’s no experience of conflicting spirits, just calm, I can use my reason to determine which option is best for the end-goal of my life (salvation).
↑ I weigh the pros and cons of doing or not doing.

